

HONOR TO THOMAS HUGHES.

PRESENTING PHASES OF COOPERATION.

RECEPTION AT THE COOPER UNION TO THE AUTHOR OF "TOM BROWN"—A LARGE AND INTELLIGENT AUDIENCE—ADDRESSED BY MR. HUGHES, GEORGE W. CURRIS, MR. COLLYER, AND OTHERS—RESULTS OF COOPERATION IN ENGLAND.

FINE ARTS.

THE WHITE HOUSE PORCELAIN SERVICE. In the spring of the year 1879 Mrs. Hayes requested Mr. Theodore R. Davis to make a set of designs for a service of porcelain, to be used at the official dinners at the White House. Mr. Davis accepted the commission, and the Messrs. Haviland & Co., of Limoges, France, undertook the manufacture of the porcelain and the decoration of it after Mr. Davis's designs. The work was successfully finished in the spring of this year, and in August Mrs. Hayes acknowledged the receipt of the dinner service in a courteous note to the artist, in which she congratulates him upon "the production of the beautiful designs which have added fresh laurels to American art."

As for the designs themselves, nothing in them belongs to Mr. Davis but what he drew himself upon his own paper. How well or ill his drawings may have been carried out, we have no means of knowing. What is evident, however, from an inspection of the china is that the professional French chinapainters have subdued Mr. Davis's drawings to the style they themselves work in, and that nothing is left by which the individuality of his handling can be discovered. They have taken no subjects, it is true, and in the main they have, no doubt, followed the details of his treatment; but, though a person skilled in such matters might wonder, in looking at the service, why French decorators should choose such subjects, he could never question that Frenche had done the painting. Every touch portrays the professional hand working in the skilful routine of the professional workshop.

In the designs themselves the mistake is made at the very outset of confounding ornamentation with literature. Mr. Davis sends out a pamphlet in which he really held so many large assemblages of persons interested in the politics of the country, was last night the scene of another crowded gathering, but in a entirely different character. The audience which had gathered to do honor to Mr. Hughes was composed in great part of workingmen and women of the better class, and great interest was manifested in all that was said about cooperation and the prospects of a better time for poor people. The platform was crowded until there was scarcely room for the speaker to stand, and among those present there were Peter Cooper, Mayor Cooper, President Barnard, Jackson S. Schultz, Collector Merritt, Thomas N. Rooker, Dr. and Mrs. Foote, Thomas C. Acton, the Rev. Robert Collyer, the Rev. E. W. Syle, Colonel Hinton and L. E. Daniels.

MR. HUGHES'S ADDRESS. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: You have asked me to speak to-night of a social movement of first-class importance, and upon which I have been engaged in my own country, for more than a quarter of a century. This subject is so large that no one can do more than touch upon a small section of it in a single lecture. I therefore must speak of it chiefly as seen in England, where I know it thoroughly. The acquaintance a man gets at second hand with this movement in Europe and America, interesting as it is in itself, does not enable him to speak with any confidence upon the revolution which separated this country from the British Crown would knit the people of the two countries closer, because the Revolution was the defence of England against herself. Mr. Hughes made use of the abbreviation point of English associations—"hear, hear," and the hearty way in which he said it further stimulated the applause which the sentiment itself evoked. Mr. Curtis introduced Mr. Hughes, who stepped to the reading desk, and carelessly leaned against it until the cheers which indicated the hearty welcome of the audience had subsided. He held in his hand a bundle of manuscripts, but seldom referred to it, except when he wished to quote figures in illustration of his argument. He spoke deliberately and in a conversational manner. He was followed by General Parsons, who spoke of the educational value of the scheme described by Mr. Hughes. Then came a humorous speech by Robert Bissell, who told of the trade strikes and political shortcomings of the "old country." Mr. Bissell, who was the next speaker, took the higher ground that cooperation was a duty. The proceedings closed with a short characteristic address by Robert Collyer.

A WELCOME FROM MR. CURTIS. To introduce the author of "Tom Brown" to an American audience is almost as supercilious as it would be to introduce the author of "Robinson Crusoe." [Applause.] He has long ago introduced himself to the affections of American boys, and to the respect and admiration of American men and women. Indeed, to write a book which the boy reads in playtime, and the girl hides under her pillow for an early start in the morning, is to be a friend of the world, and the story-teller, therefore, is the true magician. When he begins the man becomes a boy again, and sits up in his knee-enchanted, as it was possible to make him; the birds are riduously out of proportion to the other objects because they are copy of all expression of life. The red birds on the opposite page (p. 68) are catching in drawing and impossible in attitude. Even such birds are made to look as if they had some hold on the trees to which they are wired, not these birds of Mr. Davis's are not self-supporting members of society.

It would be wasted time to go through the catalogue and discuss these designs one by one, or even to select for description the worst among them. The point is, that they are not decorative, and they are not original. We pass over the unimportant fact—unimportant we mean as relating to the artistic side of the matter—that the designs do not, to use the words of the title-page—"illustrate exclusively American Fauna and Flora." Not many of these plants and animals are in fact exclusively American; several of them are direct importations from the Old World, and others are merely species of orders well known in Europe. All this is apart from the main question in looking at such a collection. It is the treatment that ought to make the American of the designs, and the treatment of these subjects is distinctly Oriental and founded on the special study of Japanese ornamentation. But Mr. Davis has not apprehended the spirit of this ornamentation, nor how to subject his realm to the laws of art.

Nor is Mr. Davis more fortunate in the shapes of his dishes and plates, cups and saucers, whether on the score of Americanism or originality. Of course there is nothing American in them, and we do not know where the critics that could make them American. But Mr. Davis is plainly not the man. It is amazing to see the efforts made to convey the impression of originality in the forms of the dishes for fish, meat and game, all of which are essentially the same, and directly borrow from the Japanese, as may be seen even in the commonest of our shops for the sale of Japanese wares. What the writer of the pamphlet means by saying that "the form of the dinner plate is unique" (an expression used more than once), we cannot guess, but it is no easier to see what he means by the remark that "the shape of the plate is unusual, and was made expressly for this use." A single visit to the shop—to Tiffany's or the Philadelphians—would disabuse the writer's mind of this notion.

Why, too, should Mr. Davis have chosen the shape of the flower of the mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) for his soup-plate? The *Kalmia* has the reputation of being poisonous—at least to sheep—and it has not, so far as we know, the most distant association with soup. The leaf of the wild apple is said to be the model of the plate for fruit, but surely would grace it, and the shape is certainly not an agreeable one to the eye. Mr. Davis will never find a better shape for a plate than the circle, a form approved by long experience. If a variation be permitted it is only toward some polygonal form like that of the octagon, that does not in reality so much catch the eye away from the circle as lead it back to it.

We would far rather have passed Mr. Davis's pottery than found fault with it, but we could not do otherwise than we have. In the present low condition of the potter's art in America, the best friend of the art is he who speaks most plainly of the faults that are making it more and more difficult every year to improve the manufacture. We are all the time shown things made at our native potteries in this vicinity that no person with an educated eye and taste—no, not even the author of "Tom Brown,"—will be able to find fault with it, but we could not do otherwise than we have. In the present low condition of the potter's art in America, the best friend of the art is he who speaks most plainly of the faults that are making it more and more difficult every year to improve the manufacture. 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